

Andrew Jackson to John Caldwell Calhoun, May 30, 1830, from Correspondence of Andrew Jackson. Edited by John Spencer Bassett.

TO VICE-PRESIDENT CALHOUN.¹

¹ To Jackson's letter of May 13 (p. 136, *ante*) Calhoun replied on the same day with a brief note, and on the 29th in a long letter in which he reviewed the Seminole controversy with a slant favorable to his side of the controversy. To it came the reply given above. It is easy to see that each letter in this affair, on each side, was written with an eye to the effect on the public when it should be published. In fact, relations between the Van Buren and Calhoun factions had come to the breaking-point before May, 1830, and Jackson in his own mind had already gone against the vice-president when he called on him to explain Crawford's letter. Looking back over the controversy it now seems that Calhoun made a mistake in publishing the correspondence. He believed that it would discredit the Van Buren leaders who had conducted the intrigue with Crawford. He thus appealed to the intelligence of the party. His opponents met him with an appeal to the passions of the party, and they won the contest. Jackson's letter of May 30 is not in the Jackson MSS.; it is here reproduced from *Niles' Register*, XL. 17.

Washington, May 30, 1830.

Sir: Your communication of the 29th instant was handed me this morning just as I was going to church, and of course was not read until I returned.

I regret to find that you have entirely mistaken my note of the 13th instant. There is no part of it which calls in question either your conduct or your motives in the case alluded to. Motives are to be inferred from actions and judged of by our God. It had been intimated

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to me many years ago, that it was you, and not Mr. Crawford, who had been secretly endeavoring to destroy my reputation. These insinuations I indignantly repelled, upon the ground that you, in all your letters to me, professed to be my personal friend, and approved *entirely* my conduct in relation to the Seminole campaign. I had too exalted an opinion of your honor and frankness, to believe for one moment that you could be capable of such deception. Under the influence of these friendly feelings, (which I always entertained for you), when I was presented with a copy of Mr. Crawford's letter, with that frankness which ever has, and I hope ever will characterize my conduct, I considered it due to you, and the friendly relations which had always existed between us, to lay it forthwith before you, and ask if the statements contained in that letter could be true. I repeat, I had a right to believe that you were my sincere friend, and, until now, never expected to have occasion to say to you, in the language of Caesar, *Et tu Brute* . The evidence which has brought me to this conclusion is abundantly contained in your letter now before me. In your and Mr. Crawford's dispute I have no interest whatever, but it may become necessary for me hereafter when I shall have more leisure, and the documents are at hand, to place the subject in its proper light; to notice the historical facts and references in your communication, which will give a very different view of this subject.

It is due to myself, however, to state that the knowledge of the executive documents and orders in my possession will show conclusively that I had authority for all I did, and that your explanation of my powers, as declared to gov. Bibb, shows your own understanding of them. Your letter to me of the 29th, handed today, and now before me, is the first intimation to me that *you* , ever entertained any other opinion, or view of them. Your conduct, word, actions and letters I have ever thought show this. Understanding you now, no further communication with you on this subject is necessary

I have the honor to be, very respectfully, your most obedient servant,